

Utricularia nephrophylla

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Utricularia nephrophylla has been the subject of many discussions and the cause of much confusion in my neck of the woods. In the last three years, many plants have surfaces as "new introductions" when in reality they are just the true *U. nephrophylla*. I will try to clear up some of this fruit salad of new non-specific names, and to clear up some of the old misidentifications and to describe this wonderful little epiphytic species that should be in the collection of every *Utricularia* grower.

This whole mess started for me a few years back when I received my first *Utricularia*: *U. nephrophylla*. It was a very pretty plant and rather large, much like the one pictured in Adrian Slack's book *Insectivorous Plants and How to Grow Them* on page 126. Unfortunately, this plant is not *U. nephrophylla* as it turns out a few years later, but a smaller variation of *U. reniformis*, according to Peter Taylor's monograph.

About two years after I received my first *Utricularia*, I received my first unidentified species. It was sent to me as *U. sp. 'Roraimae'* and it is known still today under that name. From what I could find out from other growers, German growers "discovered" it in Venezuela, about four years ago. This plant however, that has been known to so many people as *U. sp. 'Roraimae'* is, according to Peter Taylor's monograph, the true *U. nephrophylla*.

About a year later, I received another plant from Brazil, this one identified as *U. nephrophylla*. Since I doubted the true identity of this plant, and Slack's Book seemed to have the correct identifications, and the plant I received did not at all look similar to the picture in this book, I proceeded to give it a non-specific temporary name: *U. sp. 'Rio de Janeiro'*, another name to add to the fruit salad of names. This plant turned out to have the same flowers as *U. sp. 'Roraimae'* except for a small variation in the shape of the corolla. Even so, I thought that the similarities in the flower were close enough to say that the plants were of the same species. There are still heated discussions since the shapes of the leaves were much different: *U. sp. 'Roraimae'* having leaves up to 10 mm wide and *U. sp. 'Rio de Janeiro'* having leaves not even 3 mm wide, the length of the petioles being about equal.

Then, finally, the work of works was published, *The Genus Utricularia*, by Peter Taylor, and correct identifications could be made. *Utricularia sp. 'Roraimae'* and *U. sp. 'Rio de Janeiro'* are both correctly identified as *U. nephrophylla*. The former, as the name implies, from Mt. Roraima, Venezuela, and the later from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Now, what does this plant look like? Well it is very pretty, but that does not do too much for its description. The leaves are more or less numerous, through more numerous and more delicate in the form from Rio de Janeiro. In the form from Mt. Roraima they are rather kidney shaped with a width of up to 10 mm wide as observed in my own plants. The petiole can be various lengths all depending on how deep the stolons are. In the form from Rio de Janeiro the leaves are almost minute, barely reaching 4 mm in width, and are located on a rather long petiole in comparison to the leaf, about 5 mm long, and the stolons are usually located directly under the surface of the growing medium.

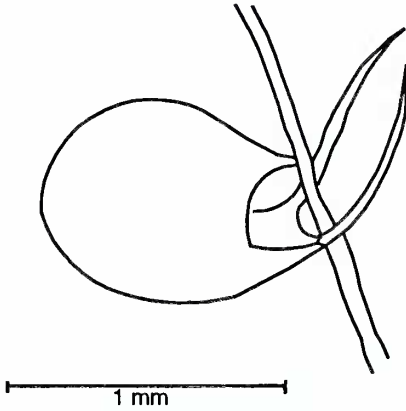
The flowers, even though they are not exactly large, are very pretty. They are located on an inflorescence which is about 15 to 20 cm long, usually solitary in the form from Mt. Roraima, and up to two in the form from Rio de Janeiro. The flowers in both of these forms are white with two yellow crests situated at the base of the lower lip. The upper lip is ovate, and in my plants, is arched over crests of the lower lip and is about

7 mm long and 5 mm wide. The lower lip in my plants is about 13 mm long and about 12 mm wide. The lower lip has two distinct lobes with the spur, which is about 8 mm long, fitting between the two lobes. Taylor mentions a third lobe that may be present directly between the two lateral lobes which is very small, though it is not present at all times and I have not seen it in my own plants.

U. nephrophylla is a very easy plant to grow. It can easily be grown and flowered in a two inch pot since it is not at all a larger grower. I have used several different mediums with equal success, there being mixtures between peat, sand and dried *Sphagnum*, and just pure live *Sphagnum* (for the larger Roraima form). I have grown my plants in 10 gallon tanks with other plants such as *Heliamphora*, and other *Utricularia*, which require warmer temperatures. If the plants are left alone they will reward your patience with a beautiful flower in a short time. After the flower has died, the plant should be divided and it will continue to grow vigorously.

One thing must be clarified, though. As the monograph is read one will notice a discrepancy between the distribution of *U. nephrophylla* in Taylor's monograph and this article. Taylor states that the plant occurs mainly in Brazil, and does not even mention Mt. Roraima or even Venezuela. I am assuming, since it was known as "sp. Roraima", that it was collected there, however, I am not at all sure of this.

Even so, this does not change the fact that I still think it is a very pretty plant and that every serious collector of carnivorous plants should have an example of *U. nephrophylla*.



Utricularia nephrophylla trap



Leaf of *U. nephrophylla* of the Roraima form



Leaf of *U. nephrophylla* of the Rio de Janeiro form

Drawings by
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